



*State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913*  
*PH (517) 373.1801 | FAX (517) 373.5801*  
*[www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/hardiman/](http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/hardiman/)*

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Contact: Kim Erdelyi  
517-373-1801

## **Sen. Hardiman promotes bone marrow registry**

**Lansing** —During the month of February, in conjunction with Black History Month, Sen. Bill Hardiman (R-Kentwood) is encouraging African Americans to donate a sample of blood and be listed on the National Bone Marrow Registry.

As part of the promotion, Hardiman will be donating his blood to be placed on the registry at “Celebrate Black History Annual Bone Marrow/Blood Drive” at 5:30 p.m. today at the Michigan Community Blood Centers, 1036 Fuller Ave. NE, in Grand Rapids.

Each year more than 30,000 children and adults in the United States are diagnosed with life-threatening diseases, in which more than 70 diseases are treatable by a bone marrow or blood stem cell transplant. Seventy percent of patients in need of a blood stem cell or marrow transplant must search for an unrelated donor.

“I first became involved with this cause when one of my dear friends, Bertha Wilson, was diagnosed with a life-threatening blood disease that can only be cured with a marrow transplant. I was shocked at the small percentage of African Americans on the registry,” Hardiman said.

As of July 2003, the National Marrow Donor Program based in Minneapolis, Minn., maintains the world’s largest and most diverse registry of more than 5 million potential volunteer blood stem cell donors. Nevertheless, even with millions of potential donors on the registry, some patients are unable to find a match because of the rarity of their tissue traits. Tissue traits are more likely to be found among people of a particular racial or ethnic heritage.

Out of the 5 million potential donors on the national registry, only 380,000 are listed as African Americans. The need for minorities to donate bone marrow is in high demand.

“I hope that by partnering with different organizations and promoting this cause throughout the state, this will be the first step toward broadening awareness and attaining our goal,” Hardiman said.

(Continued)

In addition to donating a sample of his blood today, Hardiman arranged for a special presentation from the American Red Cross Mid-Michigan Chapter at the Michigan Legislative Black Caucus meeting at 4:30 p.m. Wednesday at the University Club, 3435 Forest Road, in East Lansing. The theme of the presentation includes the need for African American legislators to promote the bone marrow registry in their communities. Hardiman also is working on other ways to promote this cause throughout Michigan in February.

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Editor's note: Information on bone marrow was provided by the National Marrow Donor Program Communications Standards: Annual Numbers, available at [www.marrow.org](http://www.marrow.org).